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Hilsman, Roger
Vietnam
Pens: Sullivan, Wm. H.

Hilsman Resignation Stirs New U.S. Debate On Vietnam

Washington, Feb. 26 — Debate here about the United States Vietnamese dilemma was intensified today by the White House's overnight announcement that Roger Hilsman, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, is quitting.

But in the wake of that announcement, there were several bits of evidence to support Hilsman's own denials of reports that his resignation resulted from intra-governmental differences over United States policy on South Vietnam.

Not Leaving At Once

Chief among these were the facts that:

1. Hilsman is not leaving the State Department immediately and may remain at his post for several more months.

2. His resignation was presented and made public last night only as to correct a report published in New York a few hours earlier to the effect that he was being forced to quit by Pentagon critics of his State Department operations.

Hilsman said in his letter of resignation that he wanted to return to teaching, which President Johnson's letter of acceptance called his "chosen profession."

The White House announcement also inspired speculative reports linking Hilsman's resignation to a State Department announcement Monday that William H. Sullivan had been named to head a new interagency committee to coordinate policy on Vietnam. Hilsman, it was suggested, found himself thereby "by-passed" and countered by resigning.

Such reports encountered not only official denials today but negotiations that a similar arrangement has long existed in respect to Cuban problems without arousing any reports or displays of resentment on the part of Thomas C. Mann, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs.

John H. Crimmins, who transferred to the United States foreign service in 1946 from the Army, in which he had served as a lieutenant colonel, has been coordinator of Cuban affairs since January, 1963.

Sullivan, who became a foreign

service officer in 1947 after wartime service in the Navy, was a special assistant to W. Averell Harriman, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, until his appointment Monday to his new post. It makes him, instead, a special assistant to Dean Rusk, Secretary of State.

Richard I. Phillips, State Department press officer, said this afternoon that no decision has yet been made about a successor to Hilsman or as to when Hilsman will actually give up the post he has held since last April 25. Hilsman himself said he hopes to get away before July 1.

There is already one vacancy in his office, Edward E. Rice, one of his two deputies, having left a week ago to become consul-general at Hong Kong. Rice, who is 55 and has been a career diplomat for more than 28 years, speaks Chinese, unlike Marshall Green, Hilsman's other deputy, whose foreign language is French.

Hilsman, who, according to State Department records, does not speak any foreign language, is a 44-year-old native of Waco, Texas, and product of West Point, class of 1943.

Library Of Congress

He was drawn into the State Department by President Kennedy, who, while a Senator, had become acquainted with Hilsman through the latter's work as chief from 1956 to 1958 of the foreign affairs division of the legislative reference service at the Library of Congress and deputy director of that service from 1958 until February, 1961, when he joined the State Department.

Hilsman, who started out there as director of intelligence and research, tried to resign ten months later in order that he might accept an endowed chair at Yale University as a professor of political science but was dissuaded by President Kennedy.